



Gordon Smith
Superintendent of Schools

Pamela Blair
Asst. Superintendent for Business

FILE: IJNDD

POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

The Superintendent and the school Principals will annually remind staff members and orient new staff members concerning the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the on-line, digital world as well as in person. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process.

East Longmeadow is committed to ensuring that all district stakeholders who utilize digital or electronic technology for educational purposes, including staff and students, do so in a safe and responsible manner. The use of electronic communication, social media, and digital technology must support the academic and extra-curricular goals of our schools.

In recognition of the importance of maintaining proper, professional decorum and appropriate communication in the on-line, digital world as well as in person, staff members must conduct themselves in ways that do not disrupt or interfere with the educational process.

Given the potential for misuse, employees **may not engage** in the following:

- Improper fraternization or inappropriate contact with students using internet sites, social networks, cell phones, texting, or other electronic communication;
- Listing current students as “friends” on **personal** social media pages or networking sites;
- Barring an emergency, contacting students outside the District’s computer and telephone system, except by coaches as prescribed below;*
- Giving out their private cell or home phone numbers to students without the prior written approval of school administration, and/or prior written parental approval
- Posting items with sexual content or exhibiting/advocating the illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol; and
- Exposing students to inappropriate websites or material without the informed written consent of parents or legal guardians.

Staff members should maintain separate professional and personal web pages and social media accounts. They should also use privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. Again, all e-contacts with students should be through the District's Google Platform.

Employees are responsible for what they post on their own sites and on the sites of others. In addition, employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate state or federal laws or district policies. Individuals may be held liable for commentary deemed to be libelous, defamatory, obscene or similarly inappropriate or that compromises the information of students, families and staff. **Even with the most rigorous privacy settings, when posting online comments that are related to school, students, families, staff or the district, even in a personal capacity, staff should act as if all comments/postings are in the public domain. Employees should remember that all online communications are stored and can be monitored.** There is no such thing as a truly "private" social media site: search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date, comments can be forwarded or copied, and archival systems save information even if you delete a post

School administrators may periodically monitor social media and conduct internet searches to ensure that staff members are not improperly using computers and technology or inappropriately posting materials online.

Employees who violate this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

***All digital or electronic communication by coaches with team members and extra-curricular advisors with their student groups shall be sent to all team members, except for messages concerning private medical or academic matters, in which case the messages will be copied to the Athletic Director or School Principal.**